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Gabelli School of Business Senior Named Rhode Island Changemaker Fellow

Monica Canova selected for new fellowship program designed to integrate student leaders into Rhode Island's entrepreneurship scene



September 14, 2015 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – In an effort to support youth entrepreneurship in Rhode Island, Social Enterprise Greenhouse and Founders League have launched the [Rhode Island Changemaker Fellowship program](#) and selected Roger Williams University senior Monica Canova as one of 10 fellows for the 2015-16 academic year.

With its official launch held Monday, Sept. 14, at a ceremony co-hosted by Senator Whitehouse at the [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) Hub in Providence, the Changemaker Fellowship program aims to better integrate local students and recent graduates into the state's startup ecosystem, open entrepreneurship opportunities to youth populations and strengthen the flow of talent that drives startup success.

"Investing in the talented leaders of tomorrow is essential for our state to stay competitive in the global economy," Whitehouse said. "The Changemaker Fellowship will help talented student entrepreneurs start and grow businesses here in Rhode Island, and I congratulate those who have been selected to participate."

Canova – a senior from Stoneham, Mass., studying business management in the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business with a minor in foreign languages – was selected as a fellow for her leadership in the University’s professional business fraternity, Delta Sigma Pi – Nu Sigma, and for her interests in social enterprise and entrepreneurship.

As a fellow, she will serve as a conduit on campus by sharing information and connecting other RWU student entrepreneurs to local resources in Rhode Island. As a group, the 10 fellows meet regularly to share insight and resources on entrepreneurial activity happening on campuses; Canova will bring that knowledge back to Roger Williams to grow her own entrepreneurial interests as well as encourage other students interested in starting businesses.

Canova says she’s confident that the fellowship will help her define her post-graduation plans as an entrepreneur, a path she’s wanted to pursue since she was a teenager.

“Social entrepreneurship is an area I’ve been interested in exploring since high school,” Canova says. “After reading an autobiography by Blake Mycoskie, the CEO of TOMS Shoes, I knew social entrepreneurship was what I wanted to do. I want to make a profitable company with a social mission successful.”

The Changemaker Fellowship program is funded by a \$200,000 innovation grant from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. Each year, the group makes a series of grants to organizations that spread the ideals of entrepreneurship and benefit local communities. Working in partnership, Founders League and Social Enterprise Greenhouse were one of only 20 awardees selected from a pool of more than applications. Activities supported by the grant seek to help more students launch ventures, find internships, and seek post-graduation job placement at local startups. This is the first time Blackstone Charitable Foundation has provided funding to support entrepreneurship in Rhode Island.

“The launch of the Changemaker Fellowship is an enormous win for Rhode Island’s entrepreneurial ecosystem,” says Social Enterprise Greenhouse University Initiative Director Cayla Mackey. “This is the first time that students have been brought together from across the state for the sole purpose of encouraging social enterprise and entrepreneurship in Rhode Island. As the base of the talent funnel, students are instrumental in improving Rhode Island's economy, and we together believe that one of the best ways to do that is through entrepreneurship.”

As a Fellow in the program, Canova will receive one-on-one mentorship support, recognition as a student leader and a cash stipend.

[Read a complete Q&A with Canova on the Social Enterprise Greenhouse here.](#)